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LETTER DATED 14 DECEMBER 1994 FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED BY RESOLUTION 724 (1991) CONCERNING YUGOSLAVIA ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On behalf of the Security Council Committee establishing pursuant to resolution 724 (1991) concerning Yugoslavia, I wish to bring to your attention the following urgent matter. The Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) informed the Committee, by a letter dated 13 December 1994, copy attached, of a major resurgence of diphtheria in several countries in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, and that the only available stocks of anti-serum to combat this serious, in fact life-threatening, situation are located in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Therefore the Acting Executive Director of UNICEF requested the Committee to facilitate action to approve through the appropriate channels the shipment of 12,000 vials of diphtheria anti-serum from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) for use in the affected countries.

Given the urgency of the matter, the members immediately considered it the same day, at the 114th meeting of the Committee. Having recalled that the provisions contained in the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular those of sub-paragraph 4 (a) of resolution 757 (1992), explicitly prescribe that all States shall prevent the import into their territories of all commodities and products originating in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), the members noted that the matter fails under exclusive authority of the Security Council. Taking into account the exceptional humanitarian circumstances of the situation, the Committee decided to recommend to the Security Council, if that would be the wish of the Council, the adoption of a resolution which would permit, for a period of 30 days from the date of its adoption, the export of diphtheria anti-serum from that country, in the quantities requested by UNICEF, namely, 12,000 vials. It was further decided to recommend that any payments for such authorized shipments shall be made only into frozen accounts.

Accordingly, again on behalf of the Committee, I would be obliged if the Committee's recommendations could be considered by the members of the Security Council as a matter of urgency.

(Signed) Ronaldo Mota SARDENBERG
Chairman
Security Council Committee established
pursuant to resolution 724 (1991)
concerning Yugoslavia

Annex

Letter dated 13 December 1994 from the Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) addressed to the Chairman of Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991) concerning Yugoslavia

Approval of Shipment of Diphtheria Anti-Serum from Yugoslavia

I am writing in order to request the Committee to facilitate action to approve through the appropriate channels the shipment of diphtheria anti-serum from Yugoslavia.

1. There has been a major resurgence of diphtheria in the Central Asian and Eastern European countries. Up to 40,000 cases are expected to be officially registered in the NIS countries this year, compared to 3,170 cases in 1990 and 19,046 cases in 1993. This has been widely reported in the international press (see for example New York Times of 29 November 1994). Currently, WHO estimates that 50,000 people will contract the disease next year. The mortality rate is 5% to 10%.

2. The international community has undertaken a significant effort to meet this challenge, and plans were recently coordinated at the Inter-Agency Immunization Coordination Committee (IICC) which reviewed this issue in Amsterdam on 11-12 November. The IICC includes the EU, other European Governments, USAID, Japan, the World Bank, NGOs, and UN agencies.

One critical bottleneck is the availability of diphtheria anti-serum, used to treat individuals who have already contracted the disease. The anti-serum is a blood product that requires a production time of six months (in contrast, diphtheria vaccine - used to prevent the disease - is also in short supply, but can be manufactured with much shorter delays). The anti-serum is usually frozen and stored for a lengthy period. However, a combination of dramatically rising cases and the declining production capacity in Eastern Europe has led to a near exhaustion of stocks.

UNICEF has contacted the major suppliers of anti-serum in Europe, North America, and Asia (a list of 14 such suppliers is attached). All of these suppliers have informed UNICEF that they have no anti-serum stocks available and no prospects for the immediate future. A few smaller suppliers have very small quantities available (e.g., 800 vials were identified in Croatia). Some suppliers have begun to resume production and may have quantities available in a few months (UNICEF will have to confirm the quality), at which time the shortage could be eased.

3. One supplier, Torlak, located in Belgrade, does have a stock available (since no one has yet purchased their stock and there is no diphtheria epidemic there, at this time). Prior to the sanctions, this company was a major

international pharmaceutical firm and frequent supplier to the international market.

UNICEF therefore proposes purchasing 12,000 vials of anti-serum (worth $144,000) from the Torlak company for shipment to the NIS countries. In order to maintain cold storage at all times, either one or two shipments would take place via Swiss Air from Belgrade (a specific notification of the flight would be provided to the Committee once the exact date is known). UNICEF will be transferring no funds to the supplier at this time. The funds will be held in a UNICEF controlled account from which no payment will be made until either the sanctions regime has been modified to permit payment or the Committee authorizes such payment.

4. It should be reiterated that this request responds to an urgent, life-threatening situation in the affected countries. Approval of the shipment of anti-serum is likely to lead to saving a large number of lives. As indicated in paragraph 1, some 50,000 people are expected to contract the disease of which some 2,500 to 5,000 will die - in other words, over 200 to over 400 per month.

Your kind assistance on this matter will be greatly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can further facilitate action.

Karin Sham Poo
Acting Executive Director

ATTACHMENT I

SUPPLIERS THAT HAVE BEEN CONTACTED BY UNICEF

Connaught Laboratories Ltd.
Ontario, Canada

Eisai Co. Ltd.
Tokyo, Japan

Pasteur Merieux
Lyon, France

Serum Institute of India
Pune, India

Korea Green Cross Corporation
Seoul, Korea

Dong Shin Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd.
Seoul, Korea

Merck Sharp & Dohme
West Point, Pennsylvania

Biocine S.p.A.
Siena, Italy

Hoechst AG
Marburg, Germany

Swiss Serum & Vaccine Institute
Berne, Switzerland

Intervax
Ontario, Canada

Perum Bio Farma
(Pasteur Institute)
Bandung, Indonesia

The Chemo Sero Therapeutic
Research Institute
Kumamoto, Japan

Lederle Laboratories
Pearl River, New York

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ATTACHMENT II

The New York Times | TUESDAY NOVEMBER 29, 1994

U.N. Reports Shortage Of Diphtheria Vaccine

GENEVA, Nov. 28 (Reuter) — As many as 40,000 children and adults will contract diphtheria in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union this year because of a shortage of vaccine there, United Nations health specialists said today.

The specialists, from the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, said the majority of cases were being reported from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

But they said all the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe had reported recent cases.

The figure of 40,000 is double the number of cases reported last year and a tenfold increase over 1990.

Diphtheria, which usually attacks the tonsils or throat membranes and can cause potentially fatal damage to the heart and kidneys, was brought under control through immunization after World War II.

But problems with the production of vaccine in Russia and in neighboring independent states since the collapse of Soviet rule have caused diphtheria rates to soar.

A Unicef statement said that among the main reasons for the resurgence of the disease were low immunization rates of children, waning immunity among adults, misleading campaigns against vaccination and large population movements.

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ATTACHMENT III

TORLAK INSTITUTE

Sera, Vaccines, Diagnostics

Beograd - Serbia - Yugoslavia

John J. Gilmartin
Chief, Purchasing EPI
U N I C E F
Copenhagen, Denmark

13 December 1994

Dear Mr. Gilmartin,

With reference to our telephone conversation and your fax EPI/jjg/chi/94-00239 of 13 Dec. 94 we, unfortunately, confirm that we agree that the payment will be into a blocked account.

We appreciate very much your efforts and assistance in this work and hope that as soon as the sanctions will be lifted, Telak will become a supplier to UNICEF again.

Best regards.

Yours sincerely,

Prim.Dr Zdravko Jankovic

EPI GROUP
13. DEC. 1994
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FAX OPERATOR

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